SHALLOW LOW ENERGY ION IMPLANTATION INTO PAD OXIDE FOR IMPROVING THRESHOLD VOLTAGE STABILITY

(1) FIELD OF THE INVENTION

The present invention relates generally to a method of forming a semiconductor device, and more particularly to form an MOS transistor with improved threshold voltage stability with the use of a sacrificial ion implantation layer.

(2) DESCRIPTION OF THE PRIOR ART

During the fabrication of shallow trench isolation regions in MOSFET devices, the current practice is to sometimes skip depositing a transfer gate sacrificial silicon dioxide layer to decrease the divot (occur at shallow trench corners) depth and improve surface planarity of shallow trench isolation regions during the inherently isotropic wet etch steps. Large divot depths cause leakage problems, particularly for 100 nm node device generation. Ion implantation to form the n- or p- well in these cases is done through the pad oxide. Because of the thickness variations of pad oxide, which may be in the range of 30-50 ^{o}A, the long channel threshold voltage variation will also be quite large.

U.S. Patent No. 4,154,626 describes a process of making an FET device with improved threshold stability by ion implantation. One method described to form the device consists of

forming at least the drain region by introducing ion implantation of an impurity opposite in conductivity to the background impurity such that the peak impurity concentration is located well beneath the surface, and subsequently implanting or diffusing a second impurity within the first region such that the peak impurity concentration is at or adjacent to the surface.

U.S. Patent No. 6,177,333 B1 describes a method for making trench isolations in semiconductor devices. Isolation trenches are formed, partially filled with a dielectric material such that at least the sidewalls of the trenches are coated with the dielectric film. Ions are implanted into the substrate in regions directly below the isolation trench. The dielectric film on the sidewalls of the trench serve as a mask so that all of the ions implanted below the trench are displaced from the active regions. The trenches are then fully filled with the same or another dielectric material.

U.S. Patent No. 2002/0179997 A1 describes a process of fabricating an FET device using a simultaneous implantation of the well species at the edge of the device and at the bottom of the shallow trench isolation regions. This procedure while simplifying the process also avoids the problems of corner threshold voltage degradation and leakage across the trench bottom.

U.S. Patent Application Publication No. 2001/0021545 A1 describes a method for eliminating the transfer gate sacrificial oxide. In the proposed method of this application, the pad nitride layer is removed after forming the isolation. Dopant ions are then implanted through the originally deposited pad oxide to form n- and p- wells.

The first three prior arts do not address the problem of well ion implantation through the pad oxide; the fourth one does not offer a solution for minimizing the threshold voltage variation resulting from through-pad-oxide implantation.

SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

Accordingly, the main object of this invention is to describe a method of forming a semiconductor device with improved threshold voltage stability.

It is yet another object to form a semiconductor device with improved threshold voltage stability using shallow implantation through pad oxide.

Another objective of the invention is to form a semiconductor device with improved threshold voltage stability using a sacrificial ion implantation layer.

In accordance with these objectives, a process is described to form a MOSFET device with increased threshold voltage stability. After forming shallow trench isolation regions using pad nitride/pad oxide mask stack and removing the pad nitride by a selective etch, required dopants are implanted into the pad oxide using low energy implantation. Deep well implantation is then followed. Using this procedure of sacrificial shallow implantation into the pad oxide prior to well implantation, threshold voltage stability variation due to pad oxide thickness variation is significantly decreased.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS.

The objects, advantages, and details of fabricating a semiconductor device according to this invention will be more clearly understood from the following detailed description taken in conjunction with the accompanying drawings.

Figure 1 is a schematic cross-section of a partially fabricated MOSFET device structure after forming shallow trench isolation regions.

Figure 2 is a schematic cross-section of a partially fabricated MOSFET device structure after selectively removing the pad nitride layer.

Figure 3 is a schematic cross-section of a partially fabricated MOSFET device structure showing the sacrificial ion implanted oxide layer.

Figure 4 is a graph showing simulated implantation profile through two oxide thicknesses.

Figure 5 is a graph showing the shallow implantation profile in the pad oxide and underlying silicon substrate.

Figure 6 is a schematic cross-section of a MOSFET device structure after well ion implantation.

Figure 7 is a schematic cross-section of a MOSFET device structure after stripping the shallow implanted pad oxide layer and growing the gate oxide layer.

Figure 8 is a schematic cross-section of a MOSFET device structure after the gate is formed.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE INVENTION

The objects, advantages, and details of fabricating a semiconductor device according to this invention will be more clearly understood from the following detailed description taken in conjunction with the accompanying drawings.

For the purpose of fabricating a MOSFET device, firstly shallow trench isolation regions are formed as follows: over a semiconductor substrate **10** such as silicon, using chemical vapor deposition (CVD) or plasma-enhanced CVD methods, deposit pad oxide **12** in the range of approximately about 25 – 120 °A thick and pad nitride **14** in the range of approximately about 500 – 2000 °A thick; using a plasma process, pattern the pad nitride using a resist mask; using nitride as a mask etch into pad oxide and into the silicon substrate to the desired depth of the shallow trench, in the range of approximately about 2000-5000 °A using suitable plasma processes known in prior art; fill the shallow trenches with a suitable dielectric material **16** such as silicon dioxide; planarize the structure using etch-back or preferably chemical mechanical polishing (CMP) method. The resulting structure is shown in Figure 1.

The pad nitride **14** is then selectively removed using either a selective plasma process or a wet etchant such as hot phosphoric acid, as shown in Figure 2.

After masking the appropriate areas if needed depending on device design (CMOS or MOS), the structure is now exposed to a low energy ion implant beam of As^+ ions: energy of approximately about 2 - 7 keV, dose of approximately about 3E11 - 7E11 ions/cm^2, and a tilt angle of approximately about 5 -10 degrees. If P^+ ions are used, the implant energy, dose, and tilt angle are approximately about 2 – 15 keV, 3E11 – 7E11 ions/cm^2 and 5 – 10 degrees respectively. The sacrificial implanted oxide layer **18** (so called because the implanted pad oxide is removed prior to gate formation) is shown in Figure 3. Alternatively B^+ ions are used for forming p- wells. The problem of V_t variation due to pad oxide thickness variation is due to a shift in implantation concentration profile. A TCAD simulation profile using arsenic (As) well implantation is shown in Figure 4 for two pad oxide thicknesses of 50 and 100 °A. It is clear from the figure that the shift in implantation profile is due to pad oxide thickness difference. This shift leads to surface As concentration differences, which in turn leads to V_t shift in the device. In order to balance this V_t shift originating from surface concentration shift, a sacrificial shallow implantation is introduced in this invention. Using low energy implantation, dopants are introduced mainly in the pad oxide, while the tail of the profile is inside the silicon substrate as shown in Figure 5. Since the long channel V_t is dependent upon the channel surface concentration, which is decided by the tail of shallow implantation profile at oxide:silicon interface in this case, V_t variation is therefore minimized. The shallow profile concentration in the pad oxide is shown in Figure 5.

The wafer is then exposed to the normal well implant As^+ or P^+ ion beam: 80 – 140 keV, 1E13 – 2E13 ions/cm^2, 0 – 15 degrees of tilt angle to form n- wells (or p- wells) **20** as shown in Figure 6. The V_t implant profile is shown in Figure 5.

The V_t values with and without sacrificial shallow implantation are shown in Table I. V_t variation for pad oxide thickness variation in the range of 35 – 110 °A is 0.489 +/- 0.0327 volts without shallow sacrificial implantation, whereas it is 0.522 +/- 0.007 volts with shallow sacrificial implantation prior to well implantation.

TABLE I. Threshold Voltage, V_t, for PMOS Device with/without Sacrificial Shallow As^+ Ion Implantation at Various Pad Oxide Thicknesses.

Pad Oxide Thickness, °A	110	100	90	80	70	60	35	0
V_t Without Implantation, volts	0.531	0.517	0.503	0.490	0.477	0.465	0.436	0.400
V_t With Implantation, volts	0.520	0.515	0.515	0.520	0.528	0.535	0.522	0.474

The sacrificial implanted pad silicon dioxide layer **18** is then stripped off in a wet etchant such as dilute hydrofluoric acid which is selective to underlying silicon. Since only one silicon dioxide wet etching step is used, attack of the oxide fill in shallow trenches to form divots, seams, and loss of surface planarity is minimized. The gate dielectric **22** is then grown, as shown in Figure 7. The gate dielectric layer comprises thermally grown or deposited silicon dioxides or

other deposited materials comprising ZrO2, HfO2, and silicates. The gate dielectric layer can be a single layer or a multiple layer stack. Gate dielectric thickness is approximately about 20 – 100 °A of equivalent silicon dioxide thickness.

The gate structure **24** is then formed using the processes known in prior art. The resulting structure is shown in Figure 8.

The advantages of this invention over prior art are:

a) Sacrificial low energy shallow implantation through mainly pad oxide stabilizes the pad oxide:silicon substrate interface dopant concentration.

b) Stable interface dopant concentration provides a device with improved long channel threshold voltage stability.

c) The method provides a device with increased V_t stability, without increasing the divot depth or decreasing surface planarity in the shallow trench isolation structures.

d) The method eliminates the use of a sacrificial oxide layer thereby simplifying the number of process steps and minimizing divot depth.

While the invention has been particularly shown and described with reference to the general embodiment and a specific application thereof, it will be understood by those skilled in

the art that various changes in form and details to the method and applications may be made without departing from the concept, spirit, and the scope of the invention.